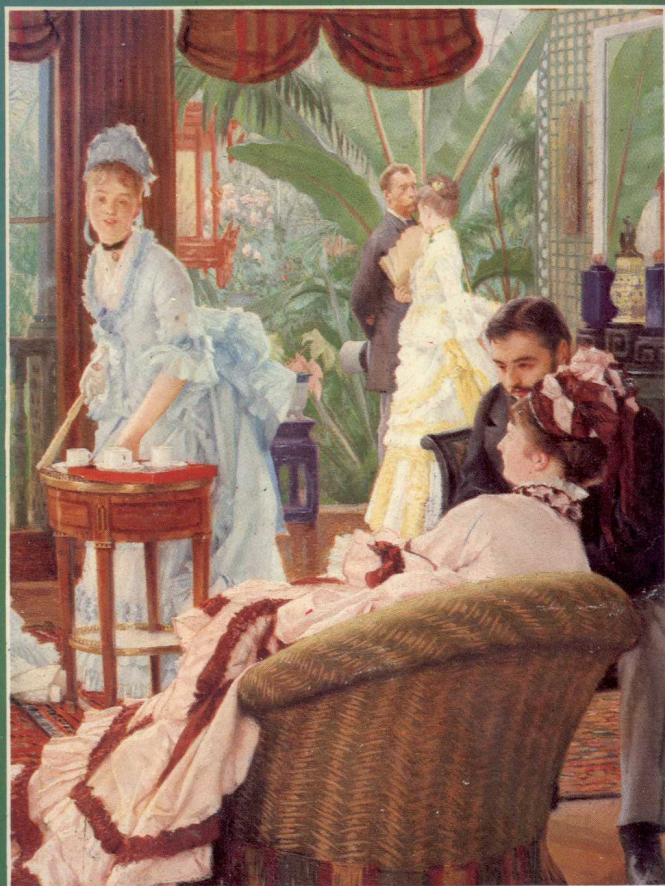


THE WORLD'S CLASSICS



# ANTHONY TROLLOPE

## PHINEAS FINN



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ANTHONY TROLLOPE

*Phineas Finn*

The Irish Member



*Edited with an Introduction by*

JACQUES BERTHOUD

*With Illustrations by*

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ANTHONY TROLLOPE (1815-82), the son of a failing London barrister, was brought up an awkward and unhappy youth amidst debt and privation. His mother maintained the family by writing, but Anthony's own first novel did not appear until 1847, when he had at length established a successful Civil Service career in the Post Office, from which he retired in 1867. After a slow start, he achieved fame, with 47 novels and some 16 other books, and sales sometimes topping 100,000. He was acclaimed an unsurpassed portraitist of the lives of the professional and landed classes, especially in his perennially popular *Chronicles of Barsetshire* (1855-67), and his six brilliant Palliser novels (1864-80). His fascinating *Autobiography* (1883) recounts his successes with an enthusiasm which stems from memories of a miserable youth. Throughout the 1870s he developed new styles of fiction, but was losing critical favour by the time of his death.

JACQUES BERTHOUD was born in Switzerland and educated mostly in South Africa. He has taught at the Universities of Natal (Pietermaritzburg), Southampton, and York, where he is now head of the Department of English and Related Literatures. His most recent publication is *Joseph Conrad, the Major Phase*.

THE CENTENARY EDITION OF  
ANTHONY TROLLOPE'S  
PALLISER NOVELS

General Editor: W. J. Mc Cormack

CAN YOU FORGIVE HER? (1864-5)

Introduced by Kate Flint and edited by Andrew Swarbrick,  
with a Preface by Norman St. John-Stevás

PHINEAS FINN (1869)

Introduced and edited by Jacques Berthoud

THE EUSTACE DIAMONDS (1873)

Introduced and edited by W. J. Mc Cormack

PHINEAS REDUX (1874)

Introduced by F. S. L. Lyons and edited by John Whale

THE PRIME MINISTER (1876)

Introduced by John McCormick and edited by Jennifer Uglow

THE DUKE'S CHILDREN (1880)

Introduced and edited by Hermione Lee

## FOREWORD

### THE CENTENARY EDITION OF ANTHONY TROLLOPE'S PALLISER NOVELS

ANTHONY TROLLOPE died in 1882, and in his centenary year Oxford University Press is launching a new edition of the six political novels commonly (if rather misleadingly) called the Palliser novels. Trollope has always been popular but the 1970s and '80s have seen a renewed and distinctive interest in his work. Instead of seeing Trollope as a quaint Victorian second-ranker who offered the hard-pressed twentieth-century reader scenes of clerical life, a new generation has decided that Trollope is a serious moralist, a consistent political thinker, a conscious artist.

The writers who introduce and annotate this Centenary Edition reflect this revaluation, but not passively nor with one voice. The Preface to *Can You Forgive Her?* is by a distinguished senior member of the British Tory Party, and is complemented by a feminist critique of Trollope's sexual politics; *The Eustace Diamonds* is annotated by an Irish Marxist. Hermione Lee relates *The Duke's Children* to America rather than Barchester, and Jacques Berthoud compares Trollope to Flaubert and Turgenev. Such diversity is not a fashionable pluralism, but directly springs from my conviction that the literature of the past has no immutable or indestructible value. Generation after generation *we* participate in the creation of that 'past' literature in a process which crucially involves a historical perspective. The critic who refuses to concede that *The Prime Minister* is a political novel nevertheless reads the character of Lopez and the anti-semitism which gathers round him in the hideous light of twentieth-century history. It is true that the recent Trollope industry has appropriated the novelist to the conservative

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cause, but the dynamics of his fiction are such that it can illustrate other ideological interpretations also.

At this point the Old Trollopian is feeling decidedly uneasy. He fears that the genial anachronisms he has mentally fondled for years are now about to be ridiculed in scholarly notes or—worse still—dragooned into some unseemly systematization. Certainly the Centenary Edition provides the most copious annotation of the Palliser novels ever published; certainly the editors marshal their critical arguments with precision and vigour. But the result contains a paradox which may both reassure the Old Trollopian and reveal something genuinely radical about the business of criticism. First of all, Trollope is a great deal more attentive, perceptive, and accurate than many of his admirers realize; second, the novels thus scrutinized offer a counter-narrative to that of the traditionalist plots, in the form of material traces which question and challenge the enfolding legitimization of liberal Tory values which were officially Trollope's.

The Brave New Critics cannot be opposed to the Old Trollopians in any simple-minded way. If the recent revival of interest is in part an exercise in extending that insidious form of social control represented by institutionalized literature, the other side of the coin shows Trollope as particularly popular during the Second World War. In June 1945 Elizabeth Bowen broadcast a playlet in which a serving soldier and his uncle (born 1882) debate the function of literature at a time of world crisis . . . 'there must be *something* about any writer who lives twice'. Of course it is not some mystical genius or individual trait of the biographical Trollope which sanctions this renewed interest in the Palliser novels; it is the multiple potentiality of literature as produced in the contradictory world of nineteenth-century Britain.

In 1882 the book trade was flourishing. The three-decker novel had not yet been unseated, and Mudie's circulating library simultaneously maintained the high price of the novel and distributed it to a public much larger than

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that which could afford to pay the retail price. It need hardly be said that today the book trade is in quite a different state, virtually ousted from the list of significant modes of cultural entertainment. Film and television, recorded music, ritualized sport even, have supplanted the book as our primary experience of art. Television has long ago taken the Palliser novels and turned them into 'The Pallisers', thereby giving an age which is materially and spiritually unstable illusory access to past opulence. What the book uniquely retains, however, is precisely the physical presence of history. The Centenary Edition acknowledges both the Trollope of the 1880s and the market of our decade. It has not entered into the fabulously expensive business of establishing new texts which, with bombinating minutiae, often retards or replaces the reader's engagement with literary history. The texts are those of the Oxford Trollope, published between 1948 and 1954 under the general editorship of Michael Sadleir and Frederick Page. Together with fresh Introductions and extensive annotations, this represents a solution of which Trollope himself might have been proud.

W. J. MC CORMACK



# INTRODUCTION

TROLLOPE. THE EUROPEAN

## I

To attempt to set the author of *Phineas Finn* in a European perspective is not easy. There is very little evidence to suggest that Trollope was in any way receptive to European ideas. His own assessment of the condition of his mind at the beginning of his civil-service career is scarcely promising: 'I could read neither French, Latin, nor Greek. I could speak no foreign language . . .' Nearly thirty years later he would produce his first full-scale political novel, on a theme of the greatest national moment, without making a single serious reference to a political event, idea, or person of European provenance. Not that the man who became the Post Office's star negotiator, and whose duties took him to three continents, could ever be described as a Little Englander. There is nothing blinkered about his analysis of government in *Phineas Finn*. Some of his most intelligent characters regularly compare British to American politics; and when his hero rises to executive office on the Colonial bench, it is for such problems as the financing of the Canadian Pacific railroad that he finds himself responsible. Nevertheless, if Trollope's England is open, the windows face south and west; on the eastern side the wall seems to be blocked up. Bismarck's Germany, for example, only appears in the form of potted peas—a possible import for the British army examined by a Parliamentary Committee; Louis-Napoleon's France is represented almost exclusively by Cayenne, its South American penal settlement for political dissidents; and as for the Russia of Alexander II it exists, if at all, in the outlandish figure of one Pjinskt, a ludicrous musician hired to perform at a London soirée. In marked contrast to John Stuart Mill, whose proposed amendment to a franchise

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bill in which he advocated the vote for women was defeated in 1867, the year in which *Phineas Finn* was being written, or to Matthew Arnold, who issued *Culture and Anarchy* two years later partly as a denunciation of jingoism and provincialism, Trollope seemed to remain impervious to every European product except claret. What, then, is to be expected from lining him up with writers whose books he could not read and whose countries he did not like?

In proposing to examine as apparently paradoxical a subject as 'the European Trollope' I have no wish to imply that he was anything less than wholly absorbed by the distinctive forms of English life. My assumption, rather, is that Victorian England, however self-sufficient it might have seemed to the Victorians themselves, was part of the system of relations that constituted nineteenth-century Europe. The name Anthony Trollope has become synonymous with the most idiosyncratic of English qualities, and therefore those least comprehensible to foreigners. My case does not require that this picture be changed—though one should not be too surprised to discover with what admiration Tolstoy read *The Prime Minister*, or how widely Trollope's novels were subsequently translated into Russian. What it does require is the premiss that to write an English novel on the Second Reform Bill presupposes concepts, such as 'the realist novel' and 'representative government', that are not only English but also European in origin and distribution; with the corollary that a failure on our part to recognize this fact must entail a failure to construe such concepts satisfactorily.

## II

*Phineas Finn* was composed between May 1866 and June 1867, and published first serially in *St. Paul's Magazine* from October 1867 to May 1869, then as a book by Virtue and Co. with illustrations by Millais in 1869. In an English context it belongs to a cluster of works that appeared in the late sixties under the impetus of the reform movement,

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and which includes, most notably, George Eliot's *Felix Holt* (1866), Bagehot's *The English Constitution* (1867), Carlyle's *Shooting Niagara* (1867), and Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). In a European context it enters into relation with a number of novels in the realistic mode concerned with politics and love, which appeared during a decade opening with Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* (conceived on the Isle of Wight in 1860 and published in 1862), and closing with Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* (sketched out in 1841-3, written between 1864 and 1869, and published at the end of 1869). *Phineas Finn* has frequently been discussed as part of the literature of reform—though not with the scope the subject deserves. But that it might plausibly claim a real if modest place among the masterpieces of Turgenev and Flaubert is less evident. Yet taken together these three novels disclose family likenesses that are surely not impossible to recognize. All three are focused on a political event of great national importance—*Phineas Finn* on the reform of Parliament in 1867, *Fathers and Sons* on the approaching emancipation of the serfs in 1861, and *L'Éducation sentimentale* on the Paris revolutions of 1848. All three writers attempt a representative portrait of their generation, and an immediately accurate rendering of its social and historical moment. All three finely balance the rival demands of private and public life, entangling political ambitions with the experiences of love in order to render justice to the full complexity of social fact. And above all each of them reveals a pervasive and passionate concern for the condition and fortune of his respective country.

The recognition of these common forms and functions does not deprive a novel of its originality, but gives it concreteness and substance. The notion of originality is freed from its connotations of the merely personal and idiosyncratic, and thus authorized to admit within itself the dimension of history. An illustration of what this means is provided in the way in which these novelists treat a social institution common to all three of them—the surviving if anachronistic practice of

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duelling. A pattern quickly reveals itself. In each case the challenger is the social superior, the occasion for the quarrel the honour of a woman, and the outcome of the meeting irrelevancy or absurdity. In these novels the duel seems to act as an index of social transition. In so far as the protagonist feels obliged to participate in an aristocratic ritual, he acknowledges his subjection to the values of a dominant class; in so far however as the event turns out to be anti-climactic or derisory, these values are revealed as archaic and obsolete.

Of course the handling of these duels reflects the enormous differences in temperament, sensibility, and talent between the three writers. But it also reflects the social and historical realities which they both observe and embody, and which can be distinguished, but not finally divided, from their personal make-up. In *Fathers and Sons* the 'nihilist' medical student Bazarov is unable to refuse the challenge of his host's uncle, an old-fashioned Anglophile dandy named Pavel Petrovitch, although he despises both challenger and challenge. For his part Pavel is unable to resist calling out his arch antagonist, whom he has caught kissing his brother's peasant mistress, although he cannot provide reasons for doing so. They exchange shots in the presence of a terrified servant: Pavel aims and misses, Bazarov, without trying, wounds his opponent in the leg, then bandages him up. The ritual has been equally meaningless to both; Pavel has fought for a girl he cannot woo, Bazarov for one he doesn't love. A full analysis would establish, I think, that both men exactly enact their roles as members of an intelligentsia disinherited of their political functions. Caught, as emancipation approaches, between an intransigent autocracy and a massively inert peasantry they find the available traditional forms, whether they adopt or resist them, essentially meaningless. In their opposite ways they are both 'superfluous men', the chivalric-liberal Pavel born too late, the positivist-radical Bazarov too early, to achieve proper self-realization.

In *L'Éducation sentimentale*, Flaubert lowers the duel to

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the level of sordid farce. In the course of an ostentatious banquet the spoiled aristocratic fop, Cisy, makes an insulting reference to Frédéric's mistress, Mme Arnoux. Frédéric flings a plate of food at him, and in the ensuing excitement he finds himself challenged not by Cisy but by one of Cisy's friends, a rakish baron who at once nominates himself as Second. As for Frédéric, he thoughtlessly secures the backing of the coarse Regimbart, and the meeting takes place less on account of the protagonists than of their subalterns. As swords are about to be crossed, Cisy collapses, cutting his hand on a stone: blood has been shed, honour satisfied; and the arrival of the gratified Arnoux puts an end to the proceedings. Flaubert's duel is much more contemptible than Turgenev's, but this cannot be accounted for solely in terms of greater congenital cynicism. Its grotesque fatuousness is an expression of the condition of the rituals of the nobility under the July monarchy, as seen from the political desert of the Second Empire. In France, unlike Russia or England, the ruling class was a post-revolutionary restoration, stripped of all hereditary respect and, after 1830, debased by a further process of *embourgeoisement*. A case could be made to show that the duel of *L'Éducation sentimentale* reflects the fate of the values of the *ancien régime* when artificially conserved in the aspic of middle-class snobbery.

Does *Phineas Finn* look any different from the vantage point we have just reached? The illegal shots exchanged by Phineas and Chiltern on a secluded Belgian beach to establish which of them has the right to pay court to Violet Effingham are more furtive but less ignoble than their European counterparts. Lord Chiltern, who has a history of wildness, fights out of passionate commitment and masculinity; Phineas responds out of self-respect, which he preserves, though wounded himself, by deliberately shooting wide of his friend; and for all that duelling continues to retain the disapproval of society neither man loses any credit when their secret leaks out. It would therefore seem natural to explain the incident in moral terms—as a test of determination and

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courage which would, once the young lady had made up her mind which of the suitors to accept, merely consolidate their mutual regard and friendship. But such an account would not wholly satisfy an attentive reader. Some months after the episode Chiltern, looking back on it, acknowledges to Phineas that what they did was 'probably absurd—but upon my life I did not see any other way out of it'. But why not? He had promised to quarrel with a rival, not to try to kill him. Such a statement draws attention to its own inadequacy—that is, to the need for an explanation not accessible to the duellists.

The European perspective helps us to see what the novel itself implies: that a duel has to be understood in terms of class. Lord Chiltern is a law unto himself—but only in relation to the decencies of urban life. He is in fact a representative of the old, individualistic country aristocracy in its least diluted form. Combative, high-spirited, reckless, and generous, contemptuous alike of the evangelical pieties of his *parvenu* brother-in-law and the moralizing self-flatteries of his own father, he is capable, like his sister, of all the fierceness of an uncompromising love. Finding no place for himself in a modern world, he becomes addicted to the danger and exhilaration of fox-hunting. Blood-sports, not the socialized team-games that have increasingly replaced them, are, of course, the historic recreations of the nobility. Hunting, fishing, shooting, and steeple-chasing form a set of related activities; these in turn are associated with such practices as duelling. 'Not to see any other way out of it' is the confession of a man whose choices are governed by a specific form of life. The other duellist, Phineas, is equally subject to social determinants. As a member of the professional classes—his father is a physician—in pursuit of a political career he recognizes how much he depends on what Trollope calls 'that socio-political success which goes so far towards downright political success'. Fortunately his natural advantages, which are all the more appealing for his unawareness of them, guarantee the required social mobility. Yet

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he remains exposed to subtle constraints that his well-born friends, like Barrington Erle, never experience. To ride Bonebreaker with Lord Chiltern in a Leicestershire meet is a test he is free to accept; to confront Lord Chiltern with a pistol on Blankenberg beach is one he is not free to refuse. It is perhaps an exaggeration to describe the duel as a *rite de passage*; but we should not overlook the fact that what makes it possible for him to take on Lord Chiltern is also what makes him welcome in the town houses and country estates of the great Liberal families; just as its lack disqualifies the Bonteens and Ratlers of the Party from receiving aught but duty entertainment.

Why is the duel less contemptible in Trollope than in Turgenyev and Flaubert? An important part of the answer must again be sought in the society which Trollope so precisely and profoundly registered. Between the years 1850 and 1870, while the failure of the 1848 revolutions had disillusioned the Russian and embittered the French progressives, England escaped the extremes of polarization attendant on political repression, and enjoyed an unprecedented period of collaboration between the upper and the middle classes. The limitation of the powers of monarchy, together with the diversion of revolutionary energies into reform, had preserved what Trollope calls 'the highest aristocracy in Europe'; the evolution of commerce and industry together with the opportunities of representative government had produced what he might with equal justice have called 'the greatest middle class in Europe'. Together they established a formidable consensus which lasted until 1867 when, with the enfranchisement of over two million people, the balance began to incline towards the bourgeoisie. In *Phineas Finn*, however, this shift remained largely unrecorded—though the strains preceding it were not unperceived; and the logic of consensus inscribed itself indelibly not only in the duel fought by the protagonist but in every phase of his socio-political progress.

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### III

Coming to *Phineas Finn* from the great European novels of the eighteen-sixties one cannot but be struck by its ideological tameness. In *L'Éducation sentimentale*, for example, the bitter, self-seeking Deslauriers, the domineering and inflexible Sénécal, and the generously ardent Dussardier are more than isolated revolutionary types: they represent a great European movement; and when they collapse, whether in the provinces, or with the police, or on the barricades, we feel that the whole movement collapses with them. Turgenev's Bazarov, perhaps as much for his assault on liberal culture as for the positive content of his revolutionary programme, seems to rise out of the depths of a great international movement. He brings to mind a succession of famous names—Proudhon, Bakunin, Marx; while it is with something approaching consternation that we discover that the year in which *Phineas Finn* was written saw the publication of the first volume of *Das Kapital*. What can Trollope's most radical politician, Turnbull, offer to match this? At best it can be said of him (as Asa Briggs has said of John Bright, the man on whom he is modelled) that he turned the tradition of liberalism into a creed which served to render the working class harmless.

We should not hasten to conclude, however, that Trollope was innocent of any ideological concern. What makes *Phineas Finn* original—indeed perhaps unique—is its interest in political institutions not as impediments to revolutionary progress, but as acceptable and necessary instruments of government. Like his creator's, Phineas's overriding desire to serve in Parliament may seem less eccentric when we consider that in mid-Victorian England Parliament had something of the appeal possessed by Literature in late nineteenth-century Russia. It is well known that under Tsarist autocracy political thinkers turned into poets and novelists and that literature became, as Isaiah Berlin has noted, 'the battleground on which the central social and political



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issues of life were fought out'. So in England the House of Commons became the acknowledged centre of national life. As *Phineas Finn* itself shows, the reports of parliamentary debates were avidly read in the daily press; lawyers like Mr. Low studied white papers; working men like Bunce knew what boroughs deserved disenfranchisement; and the very portraits of politicians found their way on to living-room walls. No English novelist—not even excepting Disraeli—was more interested than Trollope in the grain and texture of parliamentary life; no novel depicts with greater zest and detail than *Phineas Finn* all the subtle compromises, intricacies, expectations, and reversals of a parliamentary session. It is not simply the unrivalled quality of the information that is so impressive; it is the sense of parliament as an organic institution—that is, as an institution produced by time rather than theory.

The apparent irrationality of parliamentary proceedings, especially as they might appear to an uninitiated outsider, is something that Trollope delights to evoke. The House of Commons constitutes a world in which normal conventions reappear, but in oddly altered and unpredictable forms. Members of Parliament wear their hats in the Chamber; they denounce each other in public and fraternize in private; they rate secretaryships higher than lordships; they venerate fictions like the omnipotence of the sovereign, but despise facts like the fall of a government; they divide into antagonistic parties pursuing identical objectives. In all they say and do they seem to follow a code of conduct as arbitrary as the rules of a game. This strange accumulation of the spoils and detritus of time, blending wisdom and lies, triviality and awe, is irreducible to the abstract logic of a written charter. Like Trollope's gentleman, the English Constitution is an animal that cannot be defined, only recognized. How then can it serve a nation?

'Nowhere else is there the same good-humoured, affectionate, prize-fighting ferocity in politics.' So writes Trollope, not without love and pride. If Parliament imposes respect it is